

DNREC Secretary's Order, following new FDA guidance, halts shellfish harvest in seasonal area on Rehoboth Bay

DOVER – DNREC Secretary David Small has issued a Secretary's Order for closure of a conditionally-approved shellfish harvest area located in the northeastern corner of Rehoboth Bay, effective Monday, March 21. The order notes that the area designated for closure is near the City of Rehoboth Waste Water Treatment Plant, but makes clear that the decision by DNREC's Shellfish Program to recommend closure was based on an assessment of theoretical waste water discharge dilutions from the US Food and Drug Administration – and not on water quality changes in the area.

A review by DNREC's Shellfish Program in the Division of Watershed Stewardship determined that the conditionally-approved seasonal area on Rehoboth Bay no longer meets conditions to allow seasonal harvesting, according to the FDA's recently-revised theoretical wastewater discharge dilution criteria. The previous seasonal classification, from Dec. 1 through April 15, was based on adjacent marina use and historic low wastewater effluent discharge levels during winter months from the Rehoboth Wastewater Treatment Plant. The plant discharges to the Lewes & Rehoboth Canal, which connects at the northeast corner of Rehoboth Bay.

The Secretary's Order notes that seasonal and prohibited shellfish areas are intended to act as buffers to allow for safe shellfish harvesting within a growing area. Shellfish waters are classified based on the assumption that shellfish may be eaten raw, and these buffers are an effective method of mitigating any impacts to water quality from potential

pollution sources.

The area closed by the Secretary's Order – to be clearly marked by signs posted by DNREC's Shellfish Program – consists of "areas north of a line drawn from the tip of White Oak Point in a southeasterly direction to a point identified as being directly west of the south submarine observation tower at Delaware Seashore State Park, and south of the Lewes and Rehoboth Canal mouth, then in an easterly direction to the south submarine observation tower," according to Michael Bott, DNREC Shellfish Program environmental scientist.

Shellfish harvesting classifications for all Delaware waters can be found on the DNREC website's [Delaware Shellfish Program](#) webpage. An interactive map on the webpage allows users to locate their exact location on the shellfish map with the use of a smartphone or tablet. For those who do not use or have personal devices, DNREC also posts notification signs for identifying shellfish harvest area boundaries.

The Secretary's Order for the shellfish area closure can be found on the DNREC website at http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/Info/Pages/SecOrders_Regulations.aspx.

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